

ANTI-FUNDAMENTALISM MESSAGE OF CCM

Republished December 21, 2005 (Updated November 17, 2001; first published September 28, 2001) (David W. Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061-0368, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) - One of the messages that permeates Contemporary Christian Music is its dislike of fundamentalism and preaching. This is a powerful warning to strong Bible-believing churches. It is not only the worldly music that is a danger with CCM, it also the unscriptural message and the dangerous ecumenical associations. When fundamentalist churches bring CCM into their midst, they are associating with people who are their avowed enemies and who will undermine the fundamentalist position. Consider a few of the many quotes which could be given to demonstrate this:

Steven Curtis Chapman says he tries to communicate a Biblical world view in a way that Will Not Be “Abrasively Preachy” (*Huntsville Times*, Oct. 30, 1994). He says his quest for relevance has shown that the best way to communicate his faith is “not to preach fire and brimstone.”

An ad for “Fuel on the Fire” by **Morgan Cryar** says the song is “a good pop/rock sound for the teenage audience” because the “songs deal with youth issues and situations WITHOUT BEING PREACHY.” This is rebellion against the Word of God, because preaching is God’s ordained way of proclaiming the truth. The words “preach” and “preaching” are mentioned 141 times in the New Testament. Jesus Christ was a preacher. John the Baptist was a preacher. The Apostles were preachers. A chief characteristic of the apostasy of the end times is to turn away one’s ears from the preaching of God’s Word (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

The lyrics to **Donna Summer’s** music is described as being “unpreachily as possible, the approach most likely to win the attention of an intelligent non-Christian audience” (*Contemporary Christian Music Magazine*, Oct. 1984, p. 40).

Randy Stonehill says: “I DON’T WANT TO PREACH AT PEOPLE. What I want to do is communicate the truth in the most compelling, fresh, and challenging way I can. I just want to be the best songwriter and performer, unto God, that I can be. That’s the main thing” (“Kicking Around with Uncle Rand,” *Christian Music Review*, April 1991).

Michael W. Smith, one of the most popular Contemporary Christian Musicians, plainly admits that he is not preachy. “MY SONGS ARE NOT PREACHY -- at all . . .” (Michael McCall, *Contemporary Christian*, June 1986, p. 19). Smith described his non-judgmental philosophy in an interview in the May 1998 issue of *CCM Magazine*.

Don Francisco teaches the positive-only philosophy. Consider his testimony: “I knew from my own experience that PAINTING A PICTURE, RATHER THAN POINTING A

FINGER, was a much more effective way to get the Gospel into people's heads and hearts." It is strange that the Apostle Paul did not understand this. Consider Paul's sermon to the unsaved pagans on Mars Hill. He preached against their idolatry and warned them of judgment to come (Acts 17). Sounds like "finger pointing" to me, not finger pointing in the sense of a holier-than-thou attitude, but finger pointing in the sense of proclaiming God's righteous judgment and calling men to repentance. Consider, too, Paul's presentation of the Gospel in the book of Romans. It begins with God's holiness and His condemnation of man's sin. Only after this "finger pointing" is completed does he get to the good news toward the end of chapter three that Christ has made the atonement for sin. The love of God is not even mentioned until chapter five of Romans. The preachers in the early churches did not have the philosophy of Contemporary Christian Music. In fact, preachers only 30 years ago did not have this philosophy.

Amy Grant says: "That's one reason I started writing songs, because I DIDN'T WANT TO IMPOSE MY RELIGION ON ANYONE. This way the audience can sit back and draw its own conclusions. ... My art and the feeling I am trying to communicate through the songs, it would be silly for me to say, this is who God is; I don't have any answers" (Amy Grant, interview, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 21, 1984). This sounds pious to the unsaved world and to an ecumenical generation, but Amy's philosophy is strictly contrary to the Bible. The early Christians did not seek to "impose their religion" on others, but they did preach the Word of God boldly to a lost world. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). We are to hold forth the Word of life to this wicked generation (Philippians 2:15,16). The Christian is supposed to have the answers people need, because we have God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15). Certainly we DO know who God is. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

In reviewing **Steve Taylor's** music, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* noted that "THERE IS LITTLE PREACHING IN HIS SONGS. Most of them are metaphoric story-songs written from a Christian perspective" (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Oct. 11, 1984). Taylor admits that people like his concerts because there is no preaching: "Our concerts attract people because they know they won't be preachy or insult their intelligence" (Peters Brothers, *What About Christian Rock*, p. 138). Taylor was quoted as saying: "I don't think people really like to be preached at. One of the reasons Jesus was so effective is because he told parables. I think it's insulting to people's intelligence to preach at them. No one likes to be told what to believe" (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Oct. 11, 1984).

This unscriptural statement ignores two facts: (1) Jesus Christ was a preacher. At least 30 times the Gospels mention that Christ preached. Christ's ministry began with preaching (Matt. 4:17), and He preached some of the hardest sermons recorded in the Bible (i.e., Mark 9; Matthew 23). (2) Christ's parables were not given for the purpose of not

preaching but for the purpose of hiding truth from the willfully blind (Matthew 13:10-11).

Terry Taylor, formerly of the Daniel Amos Band, claims that a Christian musician does not have to preach the Gospel plainly, but can provide entertainment and fun:

“There are some people God has called to evangelism, and they’re doing a wonderful job, having results. That’s great. God wanted us to do something else, so we got into the area of challenging people, and our ministry basically happens offstage--one-on-one--when we talk with people. IT’S VERY SUBTLE, but God’s doing a work! It’s entertainment, it’s fun, it’s a concert--it’s all those things--but AT A SUBTLE, DEEPER LEVEL, IT TOUCHES PEOPLE’S HEARTS” (Terry Taylor, cited by Dan and Steve Peters, *What about Christian Rock?*, p. 109).

Taylor is preaching a theme which permeates CCM: the Christian life is about liberty and fun. This is the positive-only, non-judgmental philosophy. How does Taylor know God wanted them to do something else other than plainly preach the Gospel as we see the Christians doing in the Bible (Acts 8:4)? Paul used “great plainness of speech” (2 Corinthians 3:12). The Great Commission is not given merely to preachers or to a few full-time evangelists and missionaries. It is an obligation every born again Christian is to seek to fulfill through the New Testament church (Acts 1:8). Contemporary Christian musicians have no biblical authority to entertain the world. They have no biblical authority to water down the Gospel message so that it is acceptable to the world. They have no authority to make the Christian message vague, to make it man-centered rather than Christ-centered, to make it felt-need centered rather than cross-centered. They have no authority to draw back from preaching plainly that man is sinful and condemned, that God is holy and righteous, that Hell is eternal, that the way of salvation is narrow and requires repentance. It is not the God of the Bible who is leading in this new “contemporary” path. He has already expressed His will in the Scriptures, and we see nothing resembling a Christian rock music program there.

CCM writer/performer **Wayne Watson** says: “I won’t write a song that says, ‘You better get right with God.’ From my own experience I find that way sometimes makes people defensive” (Wayne Watson, *Christian Activities Calendar*, Spring/Summer 1989, p. 11). This is not how the Apostles and early Christians looked at things. They did not appear to mind making people defensive, because they preached boldly against sin and called upon people to repent. Preaching about God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness has always made people defensive. By the way, this is why the faithful Christians through the centuries have been hated, scorned, persecuted, and martyred. The Word of God has always been offensive and divisive. The only person who can avoid making people defensive and offending people is the person who refuses to obey God’s command to preach the truth to a crooked and perverse generation (Luke 24:46-48; Ephesians 5:11; Philippians 2:15,16).

P.O.D. (Payable on Death), a hard rock group from California, also subscribes to the positive-only philosophy: An interviewer with *Pollstar* observed: “While THEY DON’T

PREACH or try to ram their spirituality down anyone's throat, they hope that their positive message will have an influence on rock fans" (*Pollstar*, March 20, 2000).

MusicLine Magazine describes **Steve Camp's** music in these terms: "Though potent, the message NEVER OVERWHELMS OR BECOMES PREACHY" (*MusicLine Magazine*, June 1985, p. 20). Camp exhibited his non-judgmental philosophy in the following statement:

"As an exhorter, I always felt that in order to tell people the correct way to live, my life style had to be perfect, and I'm finding that's not so. I'm finding that they respond more to my weakness" (*CCM Magazine*, November 1986, p. 20).

Camp had the wrong idea about exhortation and preaching (it is possible that he might no longer hold this philosophy). Preaching is not based on the preacher's own moral perfection. The authority for preaching is God's Word, not the preacher's life. The preacher is preaching God, not himself. A preacher should strive to live according to the message he preaches, but no man could ever preach if preaching required any type of moral perfection. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Peter 4:11). The writers of the Bible were certainly far from perfect. Think of David and Solomon and Jonah and Peter. Steve Camp is not called of God to preach himself, not his strengths nor his weaknesses. He is instructed to preach the Word of God. By the way, I don't want to hear about the weaknesses of Steve Camp or Michael Smith or Amy Grant or anyone else. I want to hear about Jesus Christ and His victory and program.

The very popular CCM musician **Steve Green** also wants the world to know that he supports the non-judgmental philosophy:

"I do have personal convictions that I conduct my life by, but I'm not going to force my convictions on someone else or try to make them jump through my hoops, through the convictions I have set up for my life" (Steve Green, *MusicLine Magazine*, December 1985, p. 9).

If Steve Green's convictions are not based on the Word of God, of course he is right and he should not urge his convictions upon anyone. If, on the other hand, his convictions are based solidly upon the Word of God, he has every responsibility to urge others to follow them. Timothy was instructed, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Green's non-judgmental statement sounds like a clever attempt to escape the responsibility to preach God's standards of holiness and to reprove the works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11).

In a 1987 interview with *CCM Magazine*, the late **Rich Mullins**, popular CCM writer/performer, said that he was "really sick of all this heavy-handed Christianity," that MUSICIANS "SHOULD STOP PREACHING unless that's what God has called them to" (*CCM Magazine*, April 1987, p. 12). As we have seen, though, every Christian has a responsibility before God to proclaim the Word of God to this lost world.

Note the lyrics to Mullin's 1995 song "Brother's Keeper":

"The preacher's thinking thoughts that are wicked/ The lover's got a lonely heart/ My friends ain't the way I wish they were/ They are just the way they are/ I will be my brother's keeper/ Not the one who judges him/ I won't despise him for his weakness/ I won't regard him for his strength/ I won't take away his freedom."

This is another plain statement of the unscriptural non-judgmental philosophy which permeates Contemporary Christian Music. The Lord Jesus Christ warns us against hypocritical judgment (Matthew 7:1-5), but Christians do have a responsibility to judge sin and error (1 Corinthians 2:15; 5:1-13; 6:1-5; 14:29; Philippians 1:9). Mullins also said he would not take away someone's freedom, but Christian freedom is restricted by God's Word (1 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16) and Christians are responsible to judge sin (1 Cor. 5) and to exhort one another daily about sin (Heb. 3:13).

The group **U2** is described by the *Boston Globe* as representing a "non-dogmatic Christianity." *CCM Magazine* said U2 has "chosen instead of proclaiming a direct Christian message to act Christianly in the world" (*CCM Magazine*, July 1987, p. 46). This is another way of saying that they are positive and non-judgmental. It is impossible to obey the Bible and have a non-dogmatic Christianity. Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Savior. There is only one Gospel. There is only one Faith. The Apostles and early Christians were most definitely dogmatic in their Christianity. "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:19-20). Further, it is impossible to "act Christianly" without proclaiming a direct Christian message, because Jesus Christ has commanded every Christian to preach the Gospel and to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Mark 16:15; Philippians 2:14-16; Jude 3).

The Chinese CCM group **For You** advertises their music as "SPIRITUAL BUT NOT PREACHY" (*The Straits Times*, Singapore, May 18, 2001).

Jason Wade of Lifehouse says, "I think we have a positive message of hope. WE'RE NOT TRYING TO BLATANTLY PREACH. It all comes down to love" (David Wild, "The Rock & Roll Gospel according to Lifehouse," *Rolling Stone* magazine, June 7, 2001, <http://www.rollingstone.com/news/newsarticle.asp?nid=13983&cf=13773270>).

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